Theater

545 When the Jesuits, in the pursuit of their plans of conquest, introduced Polish drama into Ukraine at the beginning of the 17th century in the form of a school-play, the orthodox inhabitants opened a defensive campaign and founded theaters in the schools as a means of promoting their own culture. And these days are not really so far behind us; in the second half of the 19th century, this time under Russian supremacy, the theater was the only opportunity where the Ukrainian word could be heard and the only place where Ukrainian sentiment could express itself without fear of Russian censorship. When in the eighties and nineties of last century the Ukrainian theater could point to a number of great artistic and celebrated triumphant successes not only in Ukraine but also in the large towns of Russia, and was even allowed to give performances in the Tsar's palace — General Drenteln, Governor of almost half Ukraine, forbade all performances in Ukrainian areas under his jurisdiction. To protests the governor replied not untruthfully that while the Ukrainian theater in Petersburg was merely drama, it was first and foremost politics at home. We must bear in mind this national function of the Ukrainian theater if we wish to evaluate its development and achievements in the last three centuries properly.

The theater in Ukraine is characterised further by the revolutionary form of its development. It is on the stage in Ukraine that new ideas are ruthlessly opposed to what is older and what has not perhaps completely forfeited its right to exist. But there is no room for two gods. Determined by such circumstances an organic transition from one period to another seems almost impossible and history itself seems to be merely the sum of

separate and unconnected periods. This lack of tradition, of a gradual transition, of grafting the new on the old and vice-versa has certain advantages, as well as great disadvantages; it is favorable to the appearance of strong personalities who are not handicapped by obligations to the past and are therefore able to devote their entire energy to realising new ideas. 545

The third special characteristic of the Ukrainian theater is the fact that, during its entire existence, it has always been only a "theater for the people", and not only that the widest circles of the population were greatly interested in the performances and in the work and lives of Ukrainian actors but that, corresponding to the social structure of the Ukrainian people, it has always been a peasant theater, presenting, above all, the problems of peasant life.

As already mentioned, school plays gave a characteristic stamp to the earliest period of the Ukrainian drama. The school which has handed down the oldest examples of this art was the school of the Lviv Brotherhood, famous in its day. The examples we have of those early school dramas are most primitive, being mostly merely dialogues that were spoken at the Holy Grave or, when there was any special occasion in the Brotherhood School, in the courtyard of the church. Besides those dialogues which were always based on religious subjects, interludes have also come down to us, two of which by Jacob Gavatovych, dating from 1619, are distinguished in form and style from their primitive predecessors. A fairly complicated drama of the 17th century, called "A Play about the Destruction of Hell" marks the transition from those dialogues to a more developed form of dramatic art; it is written in verse, in the lively language of everyday and for a large caste, among which Christ suddenly appears as an actor on the stage. The plays belonging to the Kyiv circle which arose in the 18th century in the Brotherhood School as well as in Mohyla's famous Academy in Kyiv, were transitional in character. In this connection we must not omit to mention a dramatist at the end of the 17th century, Danylo Tuptalo (monk's name Demeter Rostovskyj).

Theophan Prokopovych, a collaborator of Peter the Great and a great scholar connected with Mohyla's Academy in Kyiv,

345 thoroughly reformed the school theater. In his theory of poetry Prokopovych issued set dramatic rules according to which the new plays, called by him tragicomedies, were to be acted. His theories had not such lasting influence as his play "Vladimir", a play that served as a model to all dramatists of the time and whose rules were so slavishly observed by succeeding writers that this entire branch of art was gradually petrified and died.

The second great period in the history of the Ukrainian theater which lasted from the beginning of the 19th century till the present day, began with the performance of a comedy from the life of the people called "Natalka Poltavka" (Natalie from Poltava). It was interspersed with songs and, both as literature and as a stage show, has become one of the classical masterpieces of dramatic art in Ukraine. Ivan Kotlarevskyj, the author, was able to book such a great success because, besides his talents as a writer, he was director of the theater in Poltava and was in possession of considerable stage technique. After this auspicious start, Ukrainian theaters sprang up like mushrooms after rain; talented actors appear, among them Shchepkin, Solenyk, Rekanovskyj, and Marko Kropyvnytskyj (1841—1910) whose genius found outlet in reforming later features of the theater in Ukraine. The repertory of the theater also grows as some of the most gifted writers in the first half of the 19th century begin to write for the stage. Among these are Kvitka (1778—1843), Shevchenko, Kostomariv and others. The subjects that proved most suitable for the stage at that time were characteristic scenes from the life of the people with the Ukrainian landscape as a background and also events from Ukrainian history, but above all the deeds of the Zaporog Cossacks, the heroes of Ukraine.

These national tendencies of the Ukrainian theater could not escape the argus eyes of the imperial government, intent on forcing all the nations within the great empire to become Russians. In 1876 a secret circular was therefore sent round all administrative authorities forbidding the speaking or writing of Ukrainian. The stage was the first position that the Ukrainian language was able to re-take. Under the pressure of public

opinion the ban on Ukrainian was lifted for the theater after five years. 545

This victory gave the Ukrainian theater a tremendous impetus as the only form of expression open to national life. The stage in Ukraine attracted more talented actors than the Russian theater could count on for the performance of popular plays; we mention only a few of the most important, such as Kropyvnytskyj (1841—1910), Zankovetska (1860), Saksahanskyj (1858), Sadovskyj (1856—1936), then dramatic critics like Starytskyj (1840—1904) who was also an exceptional stage-manager, Tobylevych (1845—1907) and others. Finally composers like Nishchynskyj (1832—1896) and Lysenko utilised this newly opened province of art in order to give expression to their ideas.

The Ukrainian troupes of actors were in those days simply called the "Meininger" in Russia (the famous theater in Meiningen was at that time at the height of its fame). And the epithet was not unmerited. For, in the same way as the celebrated German ensemble, the Ukrainian owed its unparalleled success to its harmonious management and its efforts to achieve truth in the settings of its plays. And the decisive triumph of the national idea was behind this purely artistic success. The Ukrainian language which was completely forbidden rang out unexpectedly, but all the more convincingly, from the advanced outpost of a popular stage. The sound of the Ukrainian language, of the Ukrainian folk-song, the beauty of the national costume, the magic of the Ukrainian landscape, the poetry of national traditions which the higher powers wished to stamp out at all costs, all this was displayed like a pageant to the spectators who were in danger of forgetting that they, too, were children of the Ukrainian people.

Up till the revolution of 1905 the theater in Ukraine was represented by travelling ensembles. New avenues were opened after the Russo-Japanese War and the changes that followed it. All restrictions were removed with one stroke of the pen and theater managers were permitted to extend their repertories beyond subjects from peasant life and to turn their attention to the theater in the West. It was, of course, easy to drop prohibitions that had existed up till now; but it was not so simple to

545 transform suddenly the often gifted actors who had always played peasant and Cossack rôles into players who were capable of giving a satisfactory presentation of a modern play. This aim was not completely attained till the short period of Ukrainian independence in 1918.

At this time there were two theaters in the capital which attempted to win popular support by their whole equipment, the excellence of their castes, and their sympathy with western theaters. "Oedipus Rex" which the "Young Theater" had been preparing for almost two years was an enormous success. Les Kurbas (1887), the manager and the soul of the ensemble became famous overnight. The "Young Theater" was mobile, thoroughly alive and inspired by youthful enthusiasm and a determination to work, though imperfections were bound to appear occasionally. The second modern stage, the "State Theater", was forced by its character to devote its attention to the absolute control of all means of presentation. Its head was Aleksander Zaharov (1877) and its performances were perhaps not always very lively, but they were all the more solid.

After the occupation of Ukraine by the bolshevists, the theater in Ukraine, as elsewhere in the Union, was used as an instrument of wide-spread propaganda. It was greatly extended for this purpose, so that opera-houses and also some ordinary theaters are to be found in several towns. Peasant life, however, was now banned from the stage and replaced by urban life of neutral nationality and to a large extent coinciding with the life of the working classes. The change that took place here may perhaps be briefly summed up by saying that under the influence of bolshevist reality Ukrainian dramatic art has been transformed into dramatic art in Ukraine.

In Western Ukraine the strong Polish interest in the country and the great difficulties imposed by the Polish government prevented Ukrainian dramatic art from establishing itself at first. It was only after Galicia was annexed by Austria in 1772 that the first attempts at dramatic representation were given in Greek-United theological colleges by students, and therefore without female rôles. The Ukrainian theater proper, with secular actors, only saw light in 1848, a year that was as significant

basis with Ukrainian. He established Russian theatres in the larger cities and sent them Russian companies from Leningrad and Moscow to show the greatness of Russian art, while at the same time he had Les Kurbas arrested at the end of the year and closed the Berezil Theatre, the leading company in Ukraine, and even abolished its name as Catherine the Great had abolished the name of the Zaporozhian Sich one hundred fifty years before.

The fundamental object was to re-Russianize Ukraine as rapidly as possible. In pursuance of this idea, Zatonsky even suggested that the students should be encouraged to talk a mixture of Russian and Ukrainian in the hope that they could thus be more quickly induced to accept the alien tongue. That was a rash thought, for as soon as it was reported to Moscow, there came a strong protest from Gorky that such a procedure could only injure the purity of the Russian language by mixing foreign elements in it. Zatonsky hurriedly withdrew his suggestions but it was too late and only a few years later he was to pay the penalty for his rash proposal.

It was small wonder that Khvylovy, who knew well that he was threatened with arrest and execution, committed suicide in despair on May 13, 1933 and he was followed on July 6, by Skrypnyk who was too familiar with the workings of Russian Communism not to realize that he would be steadily demoted until he could be finished off without comment as a fallen idol.

The terror and the destruction proceeded apace and after the murder of Kirov in Leningrad on December 21, 1934, new investigations were ordered and it was discovered that the bulk of the Ukrainian authors were involved in the conspiracy. In a very short time their ranks were almost completely decimated. In the same month H. Kosynka, O. Vlyzko, I. Krushelnytsky, K. Burevy, and D. Falkivsky were shot on various pretenses. Nearly all the former members of the *Vaplite,* the Neo-Classicists, the groups connected with the MARS in Kiev and the *New Generation,* were liquidated in one way or another, either by execution or deportation and deportation was practically the equivalent of death, for scarcely one of the deported ever returned to the Ukraine or made

[reference to forced Russification of Ukraine, 1933 - Analyst]

Ukraine Under the Soviets

655 firms were turned into branches of one commissariat or another. By the spring, while there had not yet been a full communization of the country, the process was well advanced and no resident of Western Ukraine could doubt as to the future of the area.

659 In Eastern Galicia, where the Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite was the predominant religion, the Metropolitan Archbishop Andry Sheptytsky was not personally touched. He was placed under more or less surveillance and found it impossible to exercise his normal activity. However, all the religious schools and seminaries under his charge were closed, the church and monastic lands were seized, and all ecclesiastical printing was suppressed. Finally, the clergy were compelled to hand over to the representatives of the government all the baptismal and other records which were incorporated in the work of the ZATS, the Soviet bureau of vital statistics. The clergy were treated as a non-working class [661] and were thus deprived of all means of livelihood, except for the free-will offerings of their impoverished parishioners.

In the eastern sections, where the Orthodox Church predominated, the same regulations were put into force with the additional proviso that the clergy had to transfer their allegiance from the Polish Orthodox Church to the locum tenens of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow. This was a first step in improving relations between the locum tenens and the Soviet government and in making the authorities of the Russian Orthodox Church a definite instrument of the government in the spreading of Russian Communism.

● 545 On the other hand, there was a considerable patronage of Ukrainian art. Certain scholars were rather favored. The Ukrainian theatre was supported on a more liberal scale than it had been under the Polish rule and there were in some quarters hopes that there might be a happy future. It was again a short dream, for [626] as 1940 came to a close, there began again the insistant but unobtrusive attempts at russification. Russian theatrical companies began to visit Lviv and other cities. The publications of the publishing firms of Lviv fell off and once more they found it necessary ooo to produce Russian books. The libraries were carefully purged of

1 [1940 -- under Russian occupation -- Analyst]

538 It had been enthusiastically received in 1944, when it appeared,
626 and the poet was awarded for it a Stalin Prize. The poem was published and republished by the state publishing houses and then it was suddenly discovered that it was untrue, bourgeois nationalist, etc. and the unfortunate author was forced to repent of his errors. As a matter of fact, even before this, many of the Russian translators had gone out of their way to insert in it various passages celebrating the Volga and the Kremlin as part of the love of Ukraine, but they, too, were reprimanded for trying to improve the work instead of condemning it for its real quality.

In every field of scholarship, literature, art, and music, the same charges have been brought with logical consistency. Anything which would remind the readers of the old pre-Communist life is treated as dangerous, but none of the authors, no matter how they have falsified history or the present, has been able to express the great achievements of the new Soviet Ukraine and to catch its spirit and show how it can in any degree differ from Moscow. At the first sign of any independent judgment, the cry is raised of bourgeois nationalism and the work is suppressed.

545 At the same time the Ukrainian scene is being overloaded with
532 things Russian. Russian theatrical companies are continually travel-
626 ling around the republic so as to show the real charity and achievements of the elder brother and inspire a desire for imitation of its life and thought under that all-time world genius, Joseph Stalin. Russian musical ensembles and exhibitions of the works of Russian artists are constantly sent to all the chief cities of the non-Russian republics, not only to acquaint the people with Russian achievements but still more to give them the necessary patterns by which they should plan their lives and work.

538 There are constantly published masses of Ukrainian translations
626 of Russian works and books translated from the other languages used in the USSR and it is almost essential for an author to allude to these and especially to the Georgian people as the people of Stalin, if he wishes to avoid the charge of bourgeois nationalism and the attempt to sow hostility between the brotherly peoples.

ooo The situation is even more severe in the field of language.

6: Armstrong S-4 (no date) 1955 RD1 Ukraine RD1

186 517 575 been founded by the nationalist intelligentsia of the East Ukraine many years before the Revolution. They were now revived, after long suppression by the Communist regime, to carry on the work of developing national culture and inculcating a feeling of national identity. The two aims could be combined because all nationalist Ukrainians felt it essential to instill a love of the indigenous popular arts and customs, emphasizing their distinctive nature. That this effort had a political as well as a cultural significance is indicated by the fact that not only the Soviet regime (both before 1941 and upon reconquest, as in Kharkov)[45] but the German police as well attacked the Prosvita societies, and in the Reichskommissariat they were able, for varying periods, to lead only a clandestine life. The desire for national expression was shared by so many, however, that the Germans felt it was impossible to dam up all outlets; therefore the Prosvita was generally permitted, though under close observation.[46] Together with the church (and a few local societies not using the Prosvita name but having the same function), it was one of the few organizations of a nationalist character which was not under direct German control.

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533 517 186 515 The work of the Prosvita groups, although arranged in various ways in different localities, may be classified under four general headings. Playing a major role everywhere were musical activities, particularly choral groups, in which the Ukrainians had always excelled, and which served as a powerful intellectual and emotional stimulus to nationalist feeling, since most of the songs were distinctively Ukrainian. In addition, groups of *bandura* players (the *bandura* is a small lute-like stringed instrument indigenous to the Ukraine) were sponsored, and orchestras were trained. In the larger centers, Prosvita collaborated with regular professional musical organizations, such as conservatories and operas, to produce nationalist-inspired performances. For example, operas were reopened in Kiev and Kharkov, and offered a considerable repertoire of native Ukrainian pieces (*Taras Bul'ba, Natalka Poltavka,* etc.) as well as traditional Western

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[45] Cf. *Nastup,* September 26, 1943, p. 3 (based on *Vinnyts'ki Visti,* August 29, 1943), on the destruction of Prosvita and its personnel in Kharkov during the Soviet interlude in February-March, 1943.

[46] MS E; PS 3943, May 22, 1942.

6: Armstrong S-4 (no date) 1955 RD1 Ukraine RD1

operas such as *Madame Butterfly* and *Les Cloches de Corneville*. Like other forms of national expression, however, operatic performances ran afoul of the Nazi hatred of independent activity. At first, the desirable places in the Kiev opera were reserved for Germans, and then, in December, 1942, the performances were suspended altogether, an action which aroused the indignation of all elements of the population.[47]

Within a matter of days after the Red Army was driven out, active theatrical groups likewise sprang up, usually with Prosvita sponsorship, even in the smaller cities of the East Ukraine. For example, a theater had been started in Zhitomir before the first month of German occupation was past.[48] Even in cities like Chernigov and Simferopol' (in the Crimea), where evidences of nationalist activity were scanty, the theater was soon in full career.[49] Since the players were generally amateurs interested in using this medium of expression of their nationalist feeling, the performances were nationalist in content as well as language (evidently to a greater extent than the opera which, being composed largely of professional performers, was imbued with an "all-Union," i.e., Russian, character, at least behind the scenes).[50] Some presentations were so strongly imbued with nationalist ideology that they were censored by the Germans; the author of one of the most popular, Constantine Hupalo, was arrested for nationalist activity.[51]

Prosvita and related groups sponsored a wide variety of more directly educational activities. These included lectures, valued as a means of propagating knowledge of the language as well as for their content; libraries and reading rooms, vital to the spread of the printed word in view of the extreme scarcity of even periodical literature; nationalist cultural work in the schools; and research and discussion on themes of national history and ethnography. In the more vigorous and less restricted societies, like the

[47] Interrogation of Shtepa, CXLVa 78; PS 1198.

[48] *Ukraïns'ka Diisnist'*, September 15, 1941, p. 1 (from *Ukraïns'ke Slovo* [Zhitomir], August 3, 1941).

[49] *Krakivs'ki Visti*, December 6, 1941, p. 4 (based on an interview with Theodore Pipa, the Chernigov editor).

[50] Cf. Tarkovych in *Krakivs'ki Visti*, July 15, 1942, p. 3.

[51] His play, entitled *The Triumph of Procurator Dal'shii*, was a drama of the Ukrainian nationalist movement under Soviet rule (*OUN u Viini*, p. 74).

7:Bregy & Obolensky H-4, 5 (no date) 1940 RD1 Ukraine RD1

668 186 The society of the 'United Slavs' was only one expression of the great liberating movement, and its failure was the logical consequence of the suppression of the Decembrist insurrection at St. Petersburg on 14 December 1825, which gave it its name.

This failure checked for a long time the attempts of political revolt in the whole of Russia. Nevertheless the intellectual movement continued, always inspired by the same sources and the same ideals.

538 The genius of Chevtchenko determined the path which the whole Ukrainian literature was to follow. It clung especially to the description of popular life, of the peasant life with its sadness and its injustices. Deeply steeped in folk-lore, it was especially inspired by the pity of the disinherited, by this social pity which is a feature of its affinity with the great Russian literature. In the writings of Marko Vovtchok (pen-name of Marie Vilinska Markovitch) in the *Popular Tales*, approved by Chevtchenko himself, we find again the touching picture of the peasant miseries. Later, in Galicia, Franko, Martovitch, and Stefanik give some pretty examples of this literature, more social than national. Parallel to this, in Russian Ukraine, this tradition was pursued until the revolution by Kotsiubinsky, Tobilevitch, and, above all, by Lessia Oukrainka, the niece of Michael Dragomanov, to whom we will presently return.

536 545 The Ukrainian Theatre experienced a remarkable development towards the end of the nineteenth century. We have already considered the taste of the Ukrainian people for dramatic art, a taste which had already found expression in the old marionette plays. The rise of the new Ukrainian literature could not fail to bring about the development of a modern theatre. As a result a troupe of Ukrainian actors, that of Kropivnitzky, was formed at Kiev and had a great success. The Imperial

7:Bregy & Obolensky H-4, 5 (no date) 1940 RD1 Ukraine RD1

Government authorized the creation of a Ukrainian 536
language theatre, limiting, however, the subjects which 545
could be treated. In conforming to the official point of view, according to which Ukrainian was only a local Russian dialect, it forbade the showing of plays other than those which bore a popular and local character. But this restriction could not seriously hinder the development of Ukrainian dramatic art, as it was the chief aim of the whole Ukrainian literature to treat subjects taken from the popular life. The success of the Ukrainian Theatre of Kiev did not fail to find imitators. Amateur troupes were formed almost in all parts of Russia and especially in the country, which successfully exploited the artistic qualities of a people so richly gifted.

As for Galicia, the political movement always 668
continued to develop rapidly here.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century a new figure appeared on the Ukrainian political arena, that of Dragomanov (1851–95), whose role was to become enormous.

Born in Russian Ukraine, he soon joined the intellectual revolutionary circles. Following the example of other revolutionary organizations in Russia, that of *Stara Gromada* of Dragomanov sent him abroad to spread there, as a political *émigré*, the ideas of a revolutionary Ukrainianism. Dragomanov at first allied himself with the Galician circles and settled in Austria, but he could not remain here as a result of his ' too red ' ideas. After this he took the road to Geneva, the rallying centre of political *émigrés* from the old Russia. There he founded a political review, *Gromada*, and undertook, from his exile in Geneva, the direction of the Ukrainian movement in Galicia. The impulse which he gave it was extremely vigorous. It led to the formation of a new party, tinted